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# Nicaragua Concedes It Is Arming

## But Calls Buildup Defense Response to Threats by U.S.

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WASHINGTON—Two high-ranking Nicaraguan officials conceded Wednesday that the leftist Sandinista regime is engaged in a military build-up but insisted that the effort is a defensive response to threats by the United States.

And the officials, Francisco Fiallos Navarro, ambassador to the United States, and Jaime Wheelock, a member of the nine-man Sandinista ruling directorate, refused to address the issue of Cuban and Soviet involvement in the arms build-up, saying this issue "is really the affair of the government of Nicaragua."

Wheelock, a former Sandinista guerrilla commander who is now minister of agriculture, said Nicaragua is building new military outposts, arming and training civilians and improving and expanding airport facilities.

### 'A Dozen' Cubans

Navarro, appearing on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" show, denied that there are any Soviet advisers in Nicaragua and said there are "no more than about a dozen" Cuban military advisers. U.S. intelligence officials said Tuesday that there are about 70 Soviet military advisers, 2,000 Cuban military advisers and 4,000 Cuban civilian advisers in Nicaragua.

Navarro also denied that Nicaragua is sending troops or equipment to the leftist guerrillas in neighboring El Salvador.

Both officials said the United States should "adopt a mature and responsible attitude" toward Central America.

The appearance of the two Sandinist and officials on U.S. television shows at press conferences Wednesday came just a day after the opening of a major Administration effort, led by Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr., to present evidence to back up Administration charges that Nicaragua is becoming "a Soviet bastion" from which violent revolution can be waged against the rest of Central America.

### Haig Repeats Charges

On Tuesday, the Administration made public a series of aerial photographs, taken from manned U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, showing military facilities including bases and airfields that U.S. officials said, are modeled on Soviet and Cuban facilities and are capable of handling advanced Soviet Mig fighter aircraft.

Haig repeated these charges before a Senate Appropriations subcommittee Wednesday, and the State Department presented a series of briefings on the photographs and other intelligence material for officials of previous administrations and other opinion-makers.

"There is nothing new in this information," Wheelock said Wednesday, "except that the United States is in fact spying on Nicaragua." The Sandinista government protested what it called the "flagrant violation of Nicaraguan sovereignty" in a note to the State Department.

In characterizing the U.S. Administration's case as "lies and distortions," Wheelock said that Nicaragua's regional airport expansion program is far from being a Cuban or Soviet military effort. He said it was designed by an American firm and financed by an international development bank.

The program to which Wheelock referred was a study of Nicaragua's civilian transportation needs, done in 1976—three years before the Sandinistas overthrew Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza—by Wilbur Smith & Associates under a contract paid for by the U.S. Agency for International Development, an arm of the State Department.

However, a spokesman for AID said the 1976 airfield study did not call for the construction of run-

ways, the placement of anti-aircraft guns or the training of Nicaraguan pilots in Romania to fly MIGs, as the Sandinistas have done.

Further, AID public affairs director Rich Miller said, the U.S. study recommended that one of the airstrips, at Puerto Cabezas, be extended to 6,000 feet, while the Sandinistas are extending it to 8,000 feet. The longer runway provides sufficient takeoff distance for a MIG fully loaded with bombs, while a 6,000-foot strip would not, he said.

Wheelock said there are no Soviet MIGs in Nicaragua and that "we don't expect at this time to have any." He added, however, that the kinds of planes that will use the newly expanded airfields "are no business of the government of the United States."

"We're not saying that we won't accept arms from any country," he said. "But this is the business of our government."

In response to Administration charges that the Sandinista government has built 36 new military garrisons since it took over in 1979, Wheelock said there were perhaps that many "remote outposts," built for "external defense."

Wheelock repeated charges made previously by the Sandinista government that the United States, in conjunction with the rightist regimes of Argentina and Chile, is undertaking a covert operation to achieve the economic, political and military destabilization of Nicaragua. Wheelock did not offer any evidence, but said the planning of that operation as the purpose of a visit by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas O. Enders to Argentina and Chile this week.

Asked Wednesday about reports of such a covert operation, Haig said it would be "inappropriate for me to comment . . . but I would certainly hope that policy position . . . does not suggest a confirmation of the report."

And while the two Nicaraguan officials denied any involvement in the war in El Salvador, Haig charged again Wednesday that "the essential command and control (of the guerrilla activity) is emanating from Managua." He also said the level of arms shipments to El Salvador "has dramatically increased" during the past month.